

Ancient Kingdoms ~ Hidden Realms

Photographs of the Mayan and Khmer Worlds
by William M. Frej



PEYTON
WRIGHT

"Look this way" is the soul's summons to wonder. Every child knows the call. It is the insistent whispering voice of curiosity within that leads us, ultimately, to care about all that is mystery. From the periphery of our mind's eye, through the haze of everyday distraction, we catch glimpses of the tantalizing unknown. For some, these fragmentary sightings of the possible ignite an unquenchable desire to know. Their search begins in an instant, and may last a lifetime.

Time lays a blurring tint over fact. What is known slips from mind to become the past falling into rank with the rest of rumor we recite as history. The recipe for concrete, one of man's most durable and serviceable discoveries, forgotten, though the Roman aqueducts stand in evidence of its durable reality. Sometimes things are lost until mankind's relentless search for reason sweeps back and restores the fact of past truths with rediscovery of ancient culture. We find sites filled with articles that demonstrate the ancients' fascination with ritual, beliefs, and the arcana of daily life. Sites that lay hidden until lit by the accidental turn of a spade. Even then, meaning, the realm of understanding created and inhabited by the original believers, along with what they felt and were animated by, remains obscured under time's forgetful sediment.

Still, through all of history, the common thread of wonder, expressed in reverence for objects, persists. Evidence of ancient fascination with surprise and beauty, the effort to reproduce the stars as jewelry, the night sky as diaphanous cloth, are here on display in the gallery. Elements of the magnificent assembled as city-scale monuments to the power of deities demanding worship surrounds us in the art of daily articles, furnishings, objects of worship, wardrobe and adornment that that are the fundamental landscape of this show. Here we have assembled a trove of object and image that invite you to speculate, admire, and rejoice in the primal human fascination with mystery as you stroll the rooms.

Bill Frej, the renowned photographer, began following that flicker of something he saw in the corner of his eye when he first ventured into the Yucatan in 1971. As a student of architecture and photography he became entranced with the mystery embodied by the ancient monumental structures hidden deep in Mesoamerica's jungle vastness. He had so many questions. Who were these people? What was the dimension of their society, their beliefs, their own sense of purpose? Such depth to the unknown.

But before they could begin to be answered, life intervened. And took him to Asia where he worked and wandered absorbing the river of culture that flows endlessly across millennia of accreted memory over vast plains, mountains, and river deltas. Asia, where he and his wife spent 430 days on foot traversing the Himalaya following a mutual desire to connect spirit and purpose.

Forty years on he returned to the cradle of his inspiration. There he spent three years penetrating remote jungles and the forgetful gauze of experience to document the wonders of ancient Mayan development in the Yucatan, Chiapas, Quintana Roo and Campeche obscured and consumed by the careless evolution of the Lacandon and Peten jungles.

Ultimately the impulse to follow the renewed scent of mystery led him to Angkor Wat in Cambodia, where he stood beneath the massive sculpted ramparts of a citadel to ancient worship, and recognized he had come full circle. There, surrounded by exquisite, carved testimonials to the passion inspired by devotion, he understood the stark similarities between the ancient impulse to worship, know, and be dazzled by mystery in the jungles of Cambodia, and its direct and deep human connection to the remnants of that same universal impulse he had witnessed as a young man wandering among the impenetrable forest canopies of deep, ancient Mexico.

Capturing the essence of that sense of mystery, striving to create a visual portal through which the rest of us can step into the presence of that state of suspended disbelief he experienced in two centers of ancient culture separated by oceans of space time and meaning is what Bill's photos do.

At a scale we can understand, in a language of image we cannot escape the depth of, Bill's extraordinary black and white works summon us in the ancient manner to: "Look this way", and wonder.

As in last year's exhibit, "The Maya", we invite you to take a leisurely wander through the gallery. It will reveal the intimate relationship between Bill's stunning images and the collection of ancient art and cultural objects, ceramic, textile, wood and stone, etc., that are the body of art produced by these and related cultures.



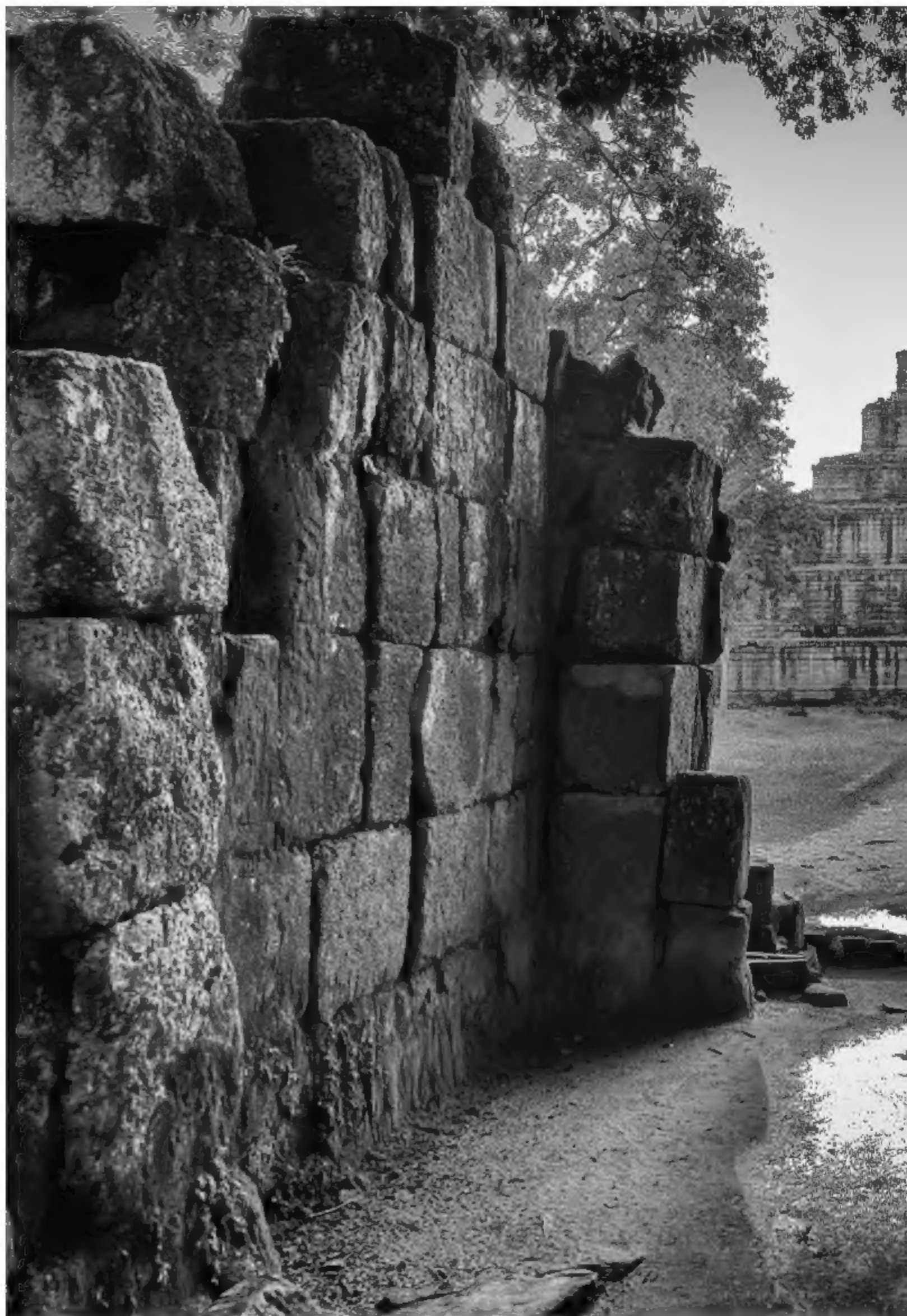


William Frej has been photographing indigenous people for over 40 years, while living in Indonesia, Poland, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan and Mexico, as well as other remote mountainous regions of Asia, documenting the changing lifestyles and architecture of many of the world's unique cultures. In 2014, his one-person photographic exhibition *Enduring Cultures* was featured at Galeria La Eskalera in Merida, Mexico as part of a citywide arts festival. It included recent black and white and color photography from Afghanistan, Upper Mustang, Nepal, and San Augustin Etla, Oaxaca, Mexico. During 2015-2016, his photography was featured in the exhibition which opened June 2015 at the Museum of Spanish Colonial Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, entitled *Tradicion, Devocion Y Vida: 80 years of Black and White Photography in New Mexico and Mexico*. His photography of the *Day of the Dead (Dia de los Muertos)* in Oaxaca, Mexico was exhibited October-December 2015 in a one-person show at Peters Projects Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Black and white photographs were featured in a major exhibition entitled *Chimayo: A Pilgrimage Through Two Centuries* at the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2016. His work was featured in the exhibition *The Maya* at Peyton Wright Gallery also in 2016. His work was also featured in *Mirror, Mirror: Photographs of Frida Kahlo* in 2017 at the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art in Santa Fe.

Mr. Frej's photographs were also featured in one-person exhibitions, *The Nomads of Kyrgyzstan*, in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 2008 and *Himalayan Pilgrimage*, at the Museum of Asia and the Pacific in Warsaw, Poland in 1998. His photographic work, *Taninbar to Tibet*, was featured in a one-person show at the Duta Fine Arts Museum and Gallery in Jakarta, Indonesia in 1991. Mr. Frej's other exhibitions include the Tucson Art Center in 1972, The Eye Gallery in San Francisco in 1977, and the San Francisco Arts Festival in 1976 and 1977. His photographs of Peru received purchase awards from the San Francisco Arts Commission and the San Francisco Arts Festival in the 1970s.

His photographs of the Himalaya, India and Africa were featured in the Edwin Bernbaum book, *Sacred Mountains of the World*, and his photographs of India's Tilwara camel fair were highlighted in *Adventure Travel Magazine*. Mr. Frej's photographic work is represented in numerous public and private collections throughout the United States, Mexico, Europe and Asia.

www.williamfrejphotography.com





Northwest Cambodia

Prasat Prang, 2016

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

20 x 30 inches





Cambodia

Bayon, 2016

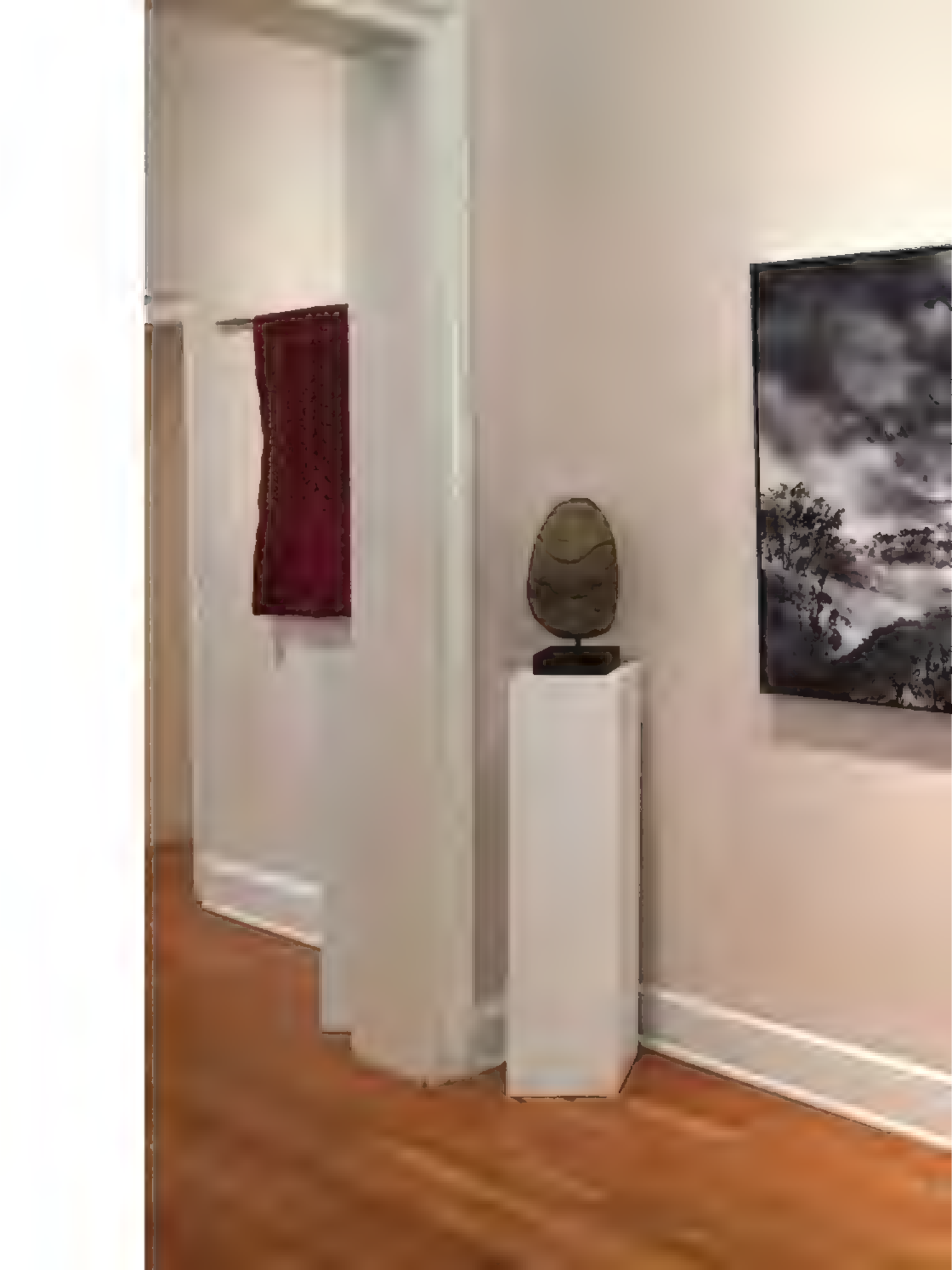
Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

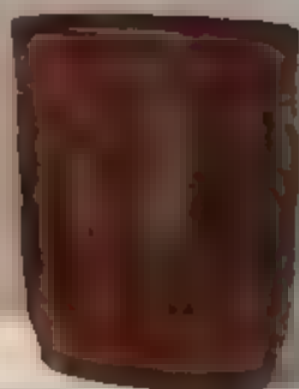
30 x 45 inches





Krong Siem Reap, Cambodia
Angkor Wat, 2016
Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6
40 x 60 inches









Cambodia

Prasat Yeai Poeun, 2016

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

30 x 45 inches





Krong Siem Reap, Cambodia

Bayon, 2016

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

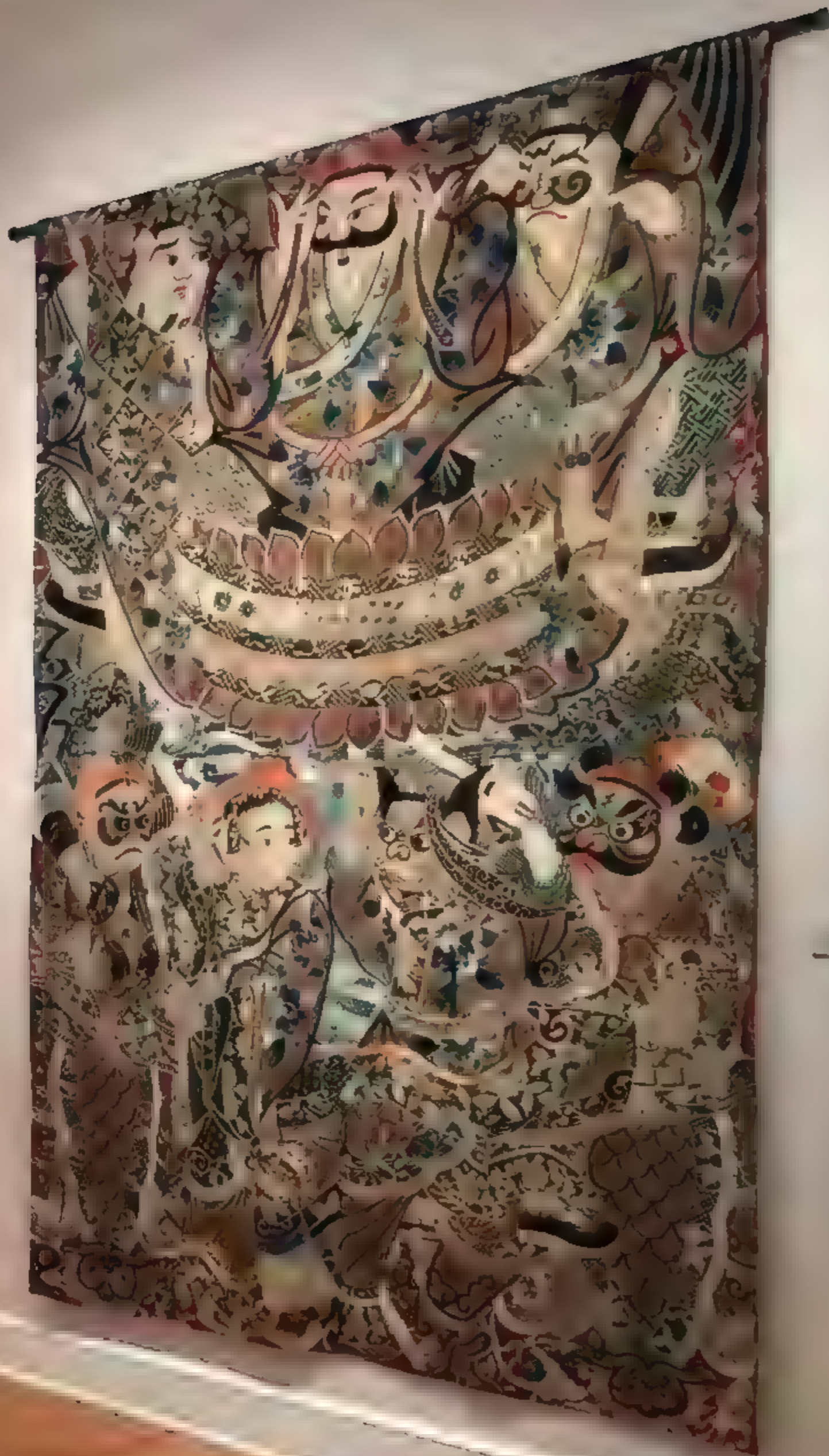
40 x 60 inches





Krong Siem Reap, Cambodia
Angkor Wat, 2016
Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6
40 x 60 inches







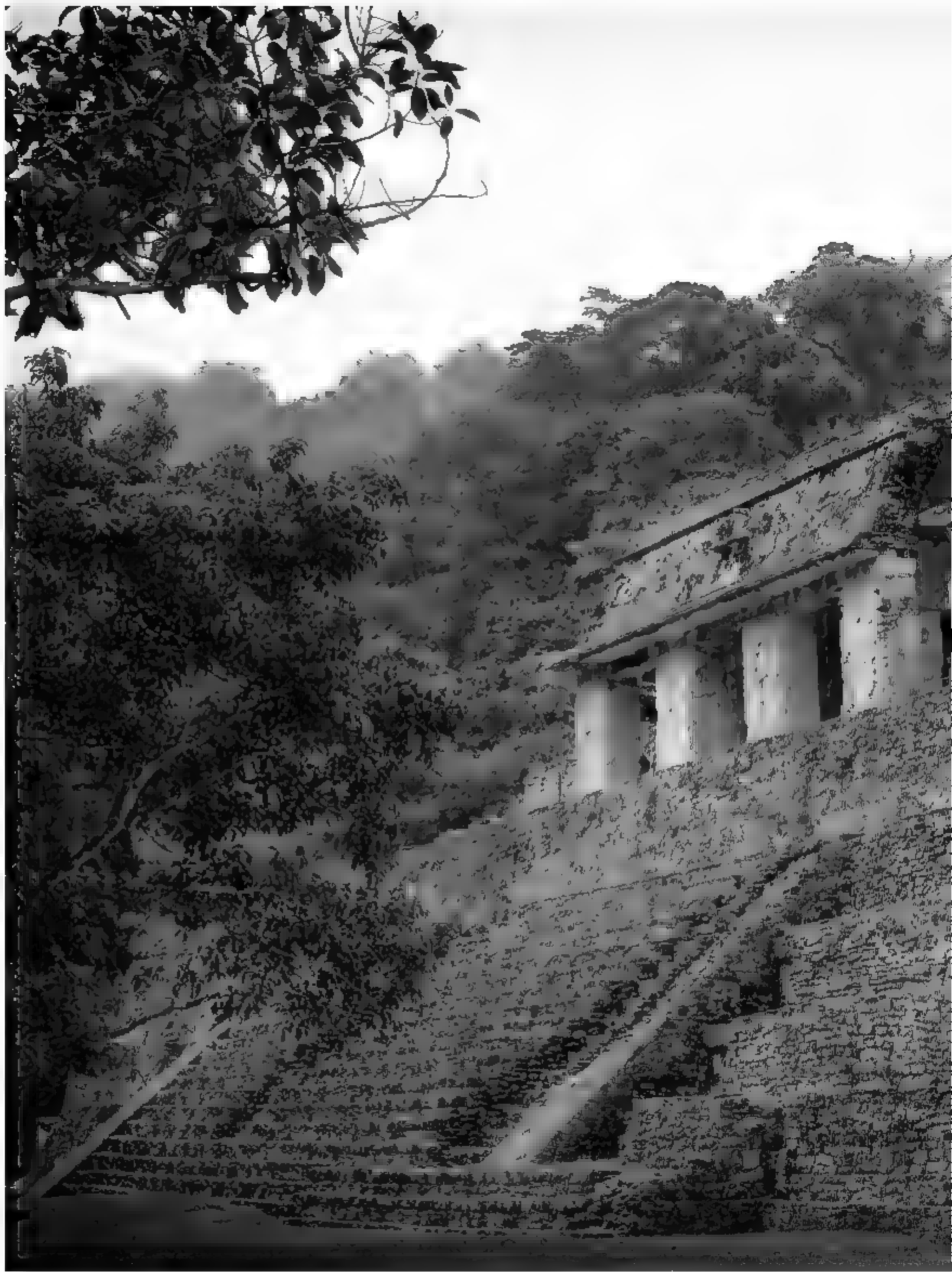


Brasat Bakong, Cambodia

Angkor Wat, 2016

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

40 x 60 inches





Chiapas, Mexico

Palenque, 2017

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

40 x 60 inches



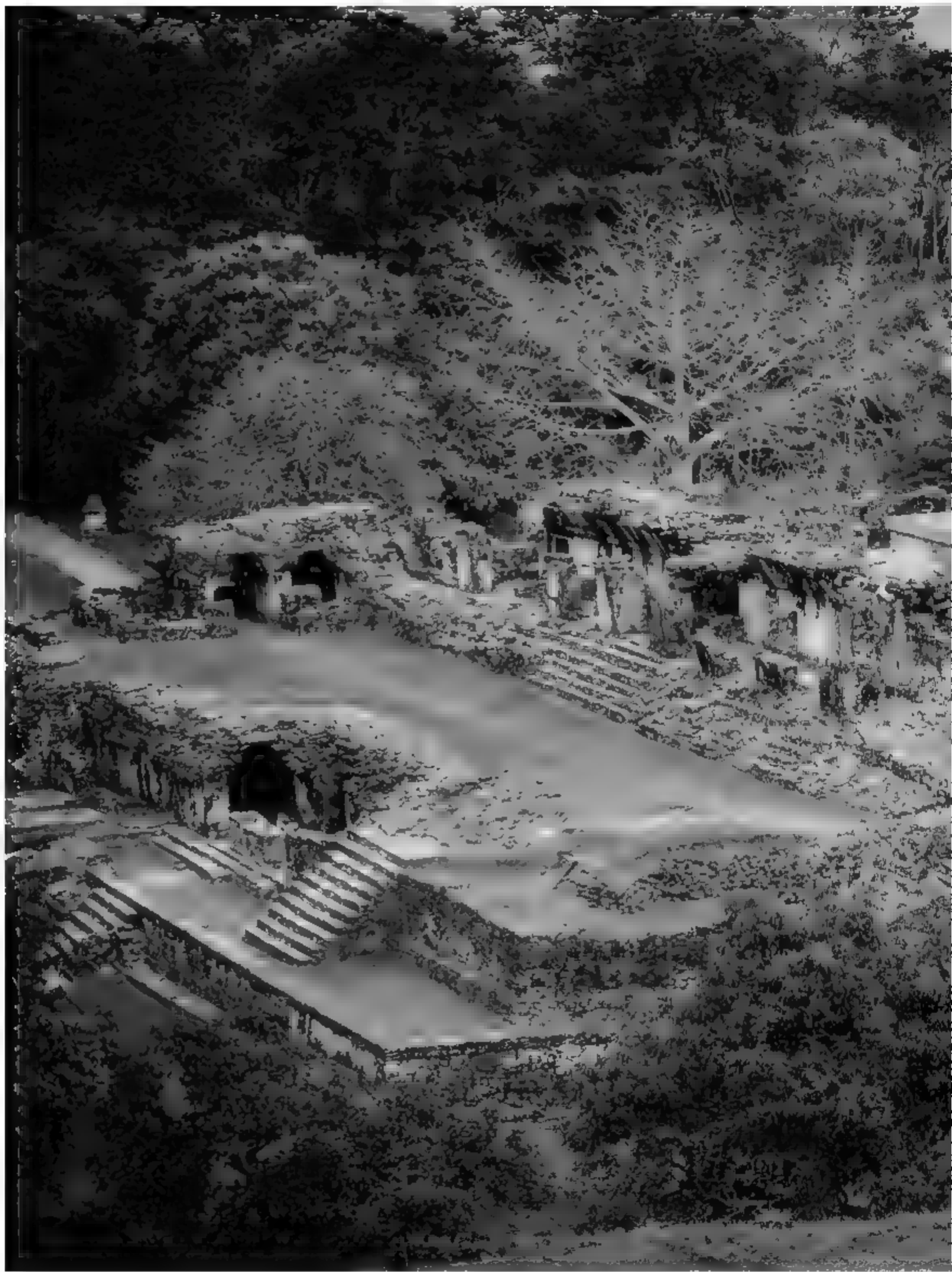


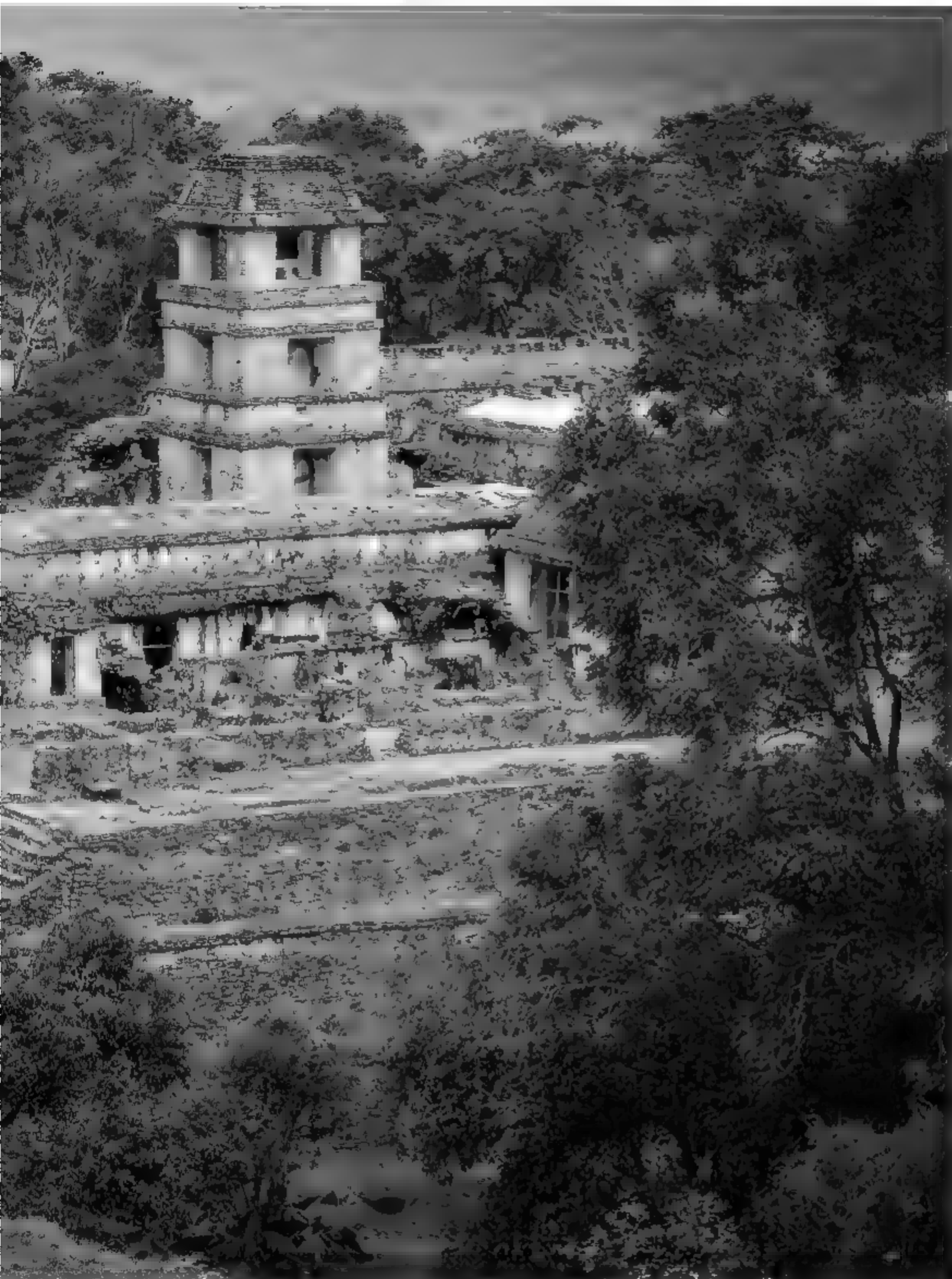
Cambodia

Bayon, 2016

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

30 x 45 inches





Chiapas, Mexico

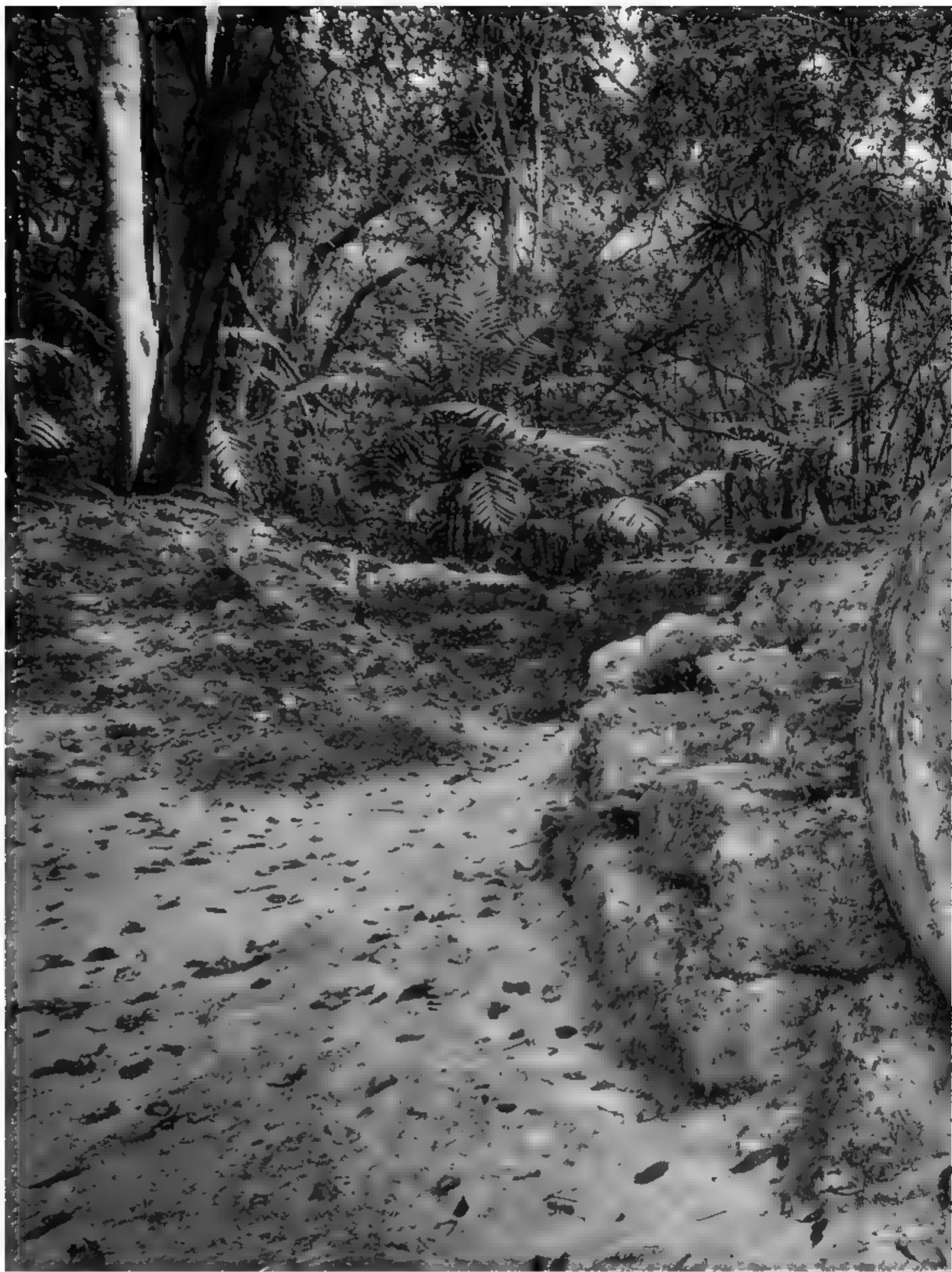
Palenque Palace, 2017

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

20 x 30 inches









Guatemala
Tikal Altar, 2017
Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6
30 x 45 inches





Chiapas, Mexico

Yaxchilan, 2017

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

40 x 60 inches





Yucatan, Mexico

Mayapan, Temple of Kukulcan & Redondo, 2017

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

20 x 30 inches





Campeche, Mexico

Chunyaxnic, 2017

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

20 x 30 inches







Guatemala

Tikal Temple V, 2017

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6
60 x 40 inches





Yucatan, Mexico

Mayapan, Temple of Kukulkan, 2017

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

20 x 30 inches

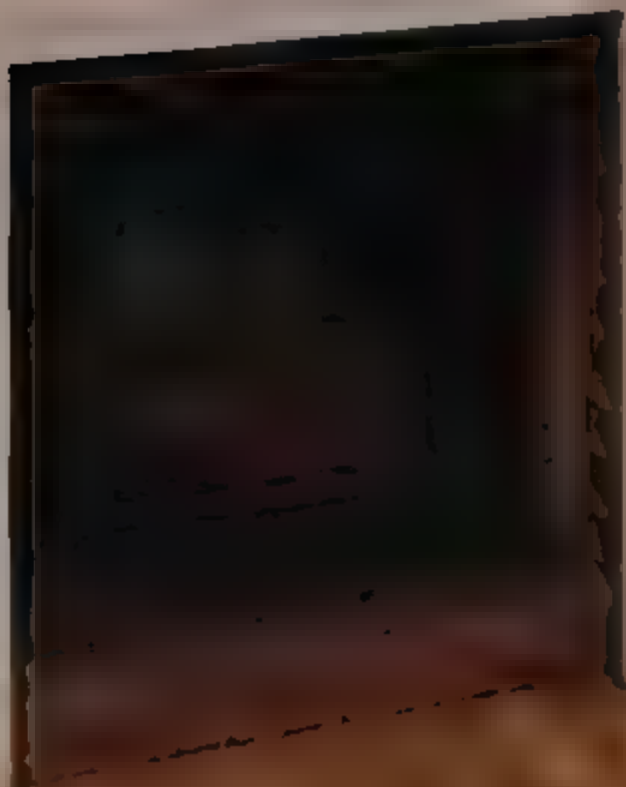
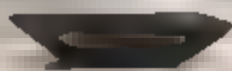


Guatemala

Seibal Stela, 2017

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

60 x 40 inches







Guatemala

Tikal Templo 5-C49, 2017

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

30 x 45 inches

Guatemala
Tikal Temple I, 2017
Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6
60 x 40 inches





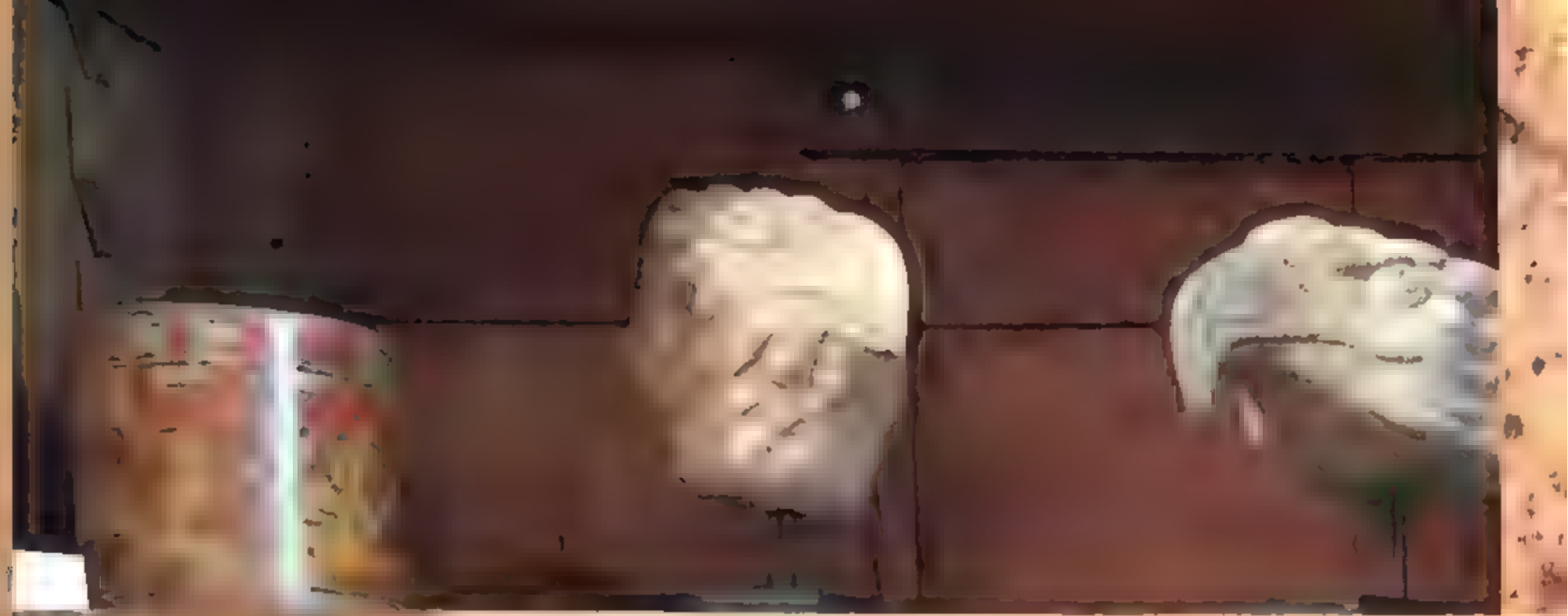


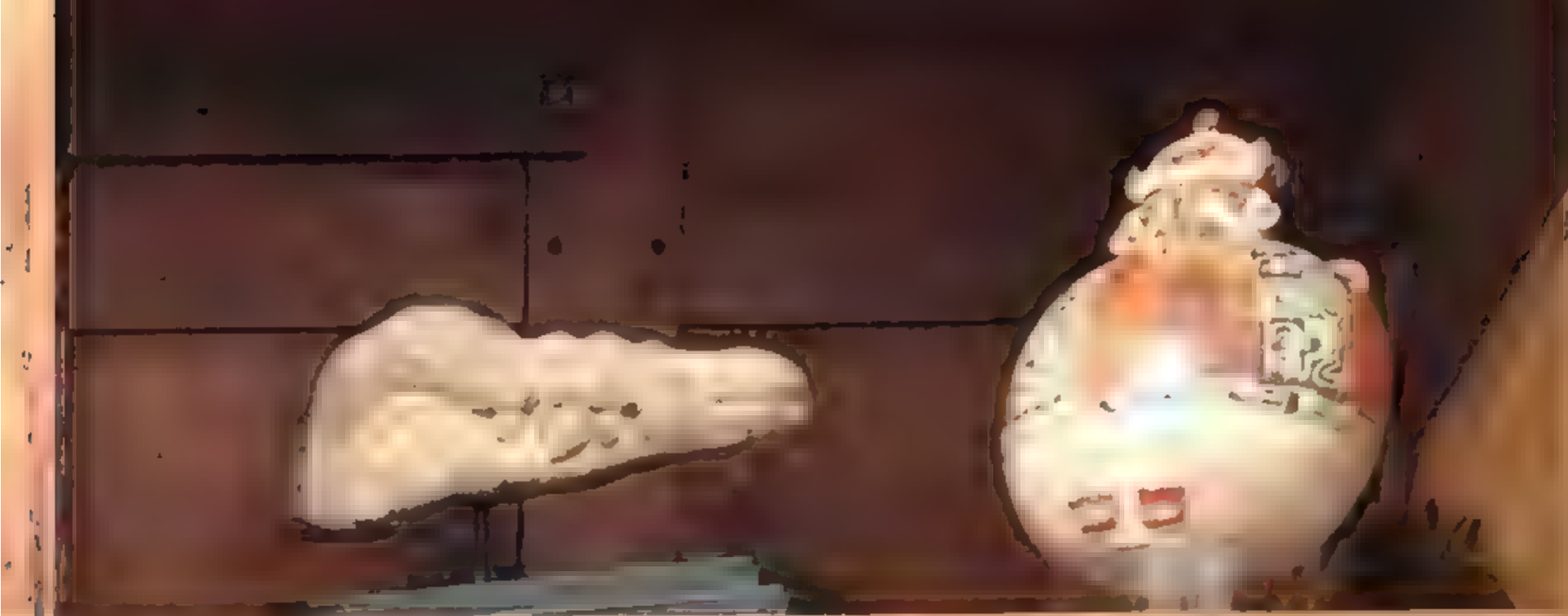
Campeche, Mexico

Dsibiltun, 2016

Archival chromogenic silver halide print, ed 6

30 x 45 inches





Coastal Peru
Nasca-Huari Culture
Checkerboard Cushma, 500-700 CE
Cotton, camelid wool, and natural dyes
99 x 52 inches

Provenance
private collection, San Francisco, CA







Escoma, Bolivia
Aymara Culture
Ikat Poncho, c 1750
Alpaca, cotton, cochineal, indigo, natural dyes
77 x 58 inches

Provenance
ex Heriot Collection, CA, acquired 1977-78





South Coast of Peru
Sihuas Culture
Mantle, 100-300 CE
Camelid wool, natural dyes
80 x 64 inches

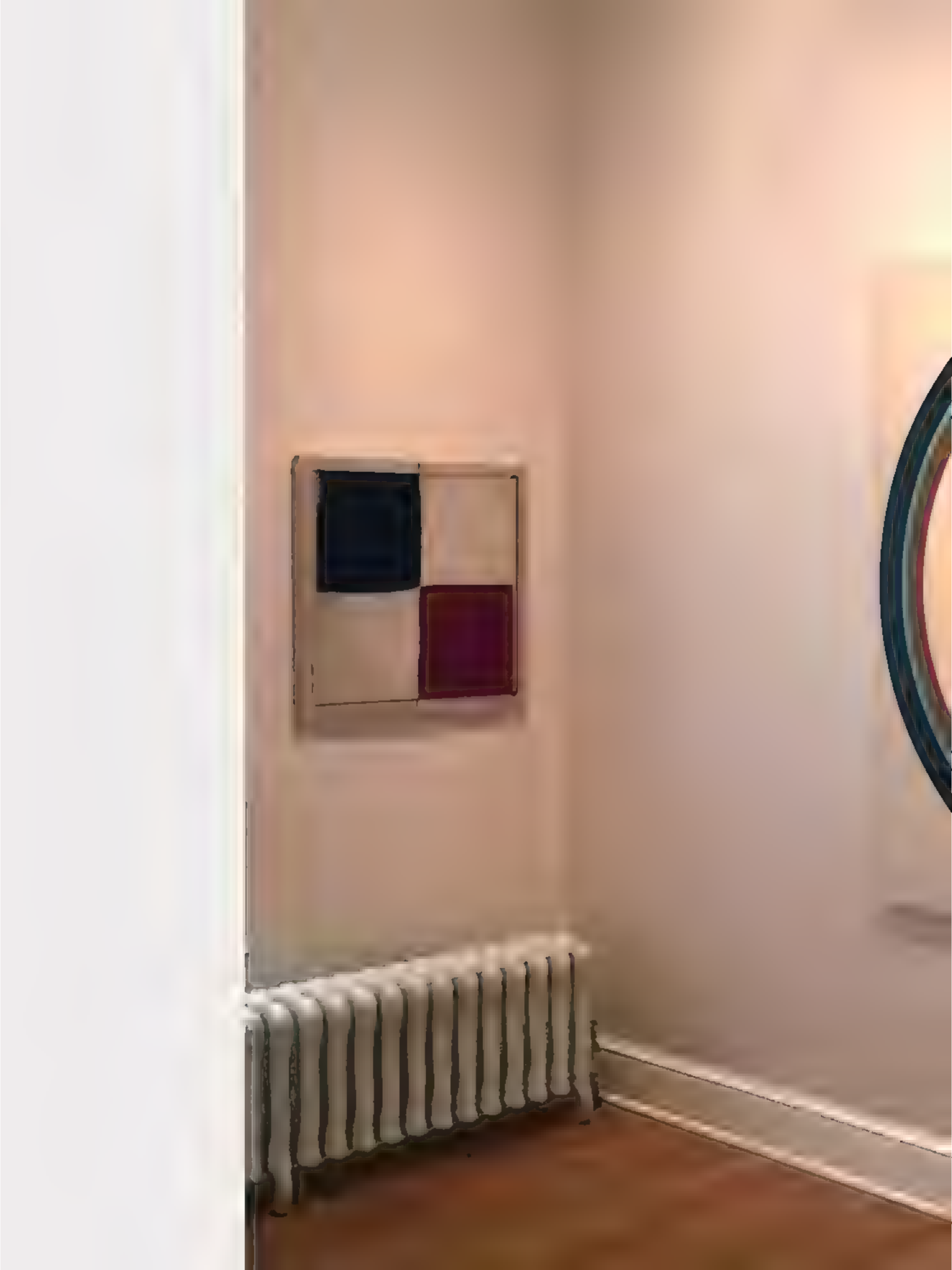
Provenance
private collection, CA, acquired 1977-78

Peru
Nasca Culture
Tari, 100 BCE - 800 CE
Cotton, camelid wool, natural dyes
28 x 28 inches

Provenance
private collection, Santa Fe, NM









11





Mesoamerica

Aztec Culture

Ocelot, 1300-1500 CE

Stone

12.25 x 10 x 3 inches

Provenance

ex private collection, CA





Honduras

Mayan Culture

Camazotz (Bat Deity), 900-1520 CE

Stone

7.75 x 7 x 14 inches

Provenance

ex collection of Milton Birnbaum, M.D. 1968

ex collection of Professor Peter Arnovick

ex collection, Miguelangelo Juarez Giron, CA

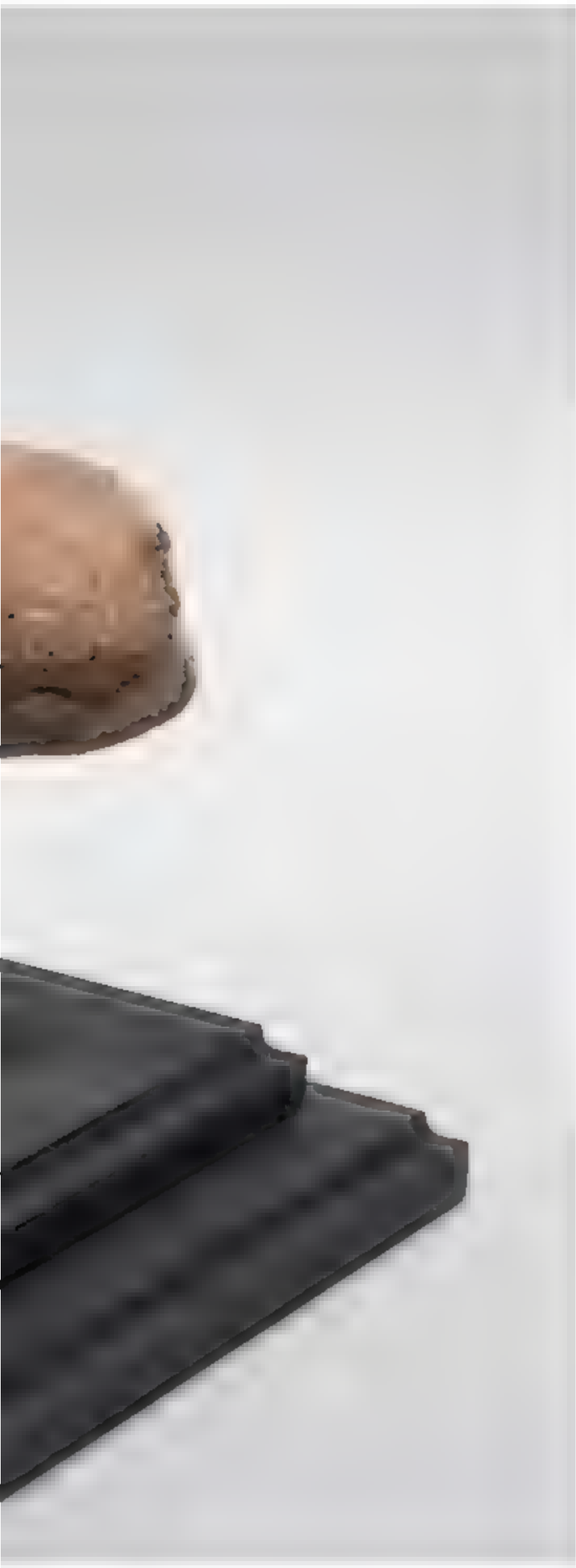
Mesoamerica
Aztec Culture
Cuauhtli (Head of an Eagle), 1200-1400 CE
Stone
4.5 x 6 x 9 inches

Provenance
ex private collection, CA









Mesoamerica

Aztec Culture

Cipactli (Head of a Caiman, Set of Three), 1200-1400 CE

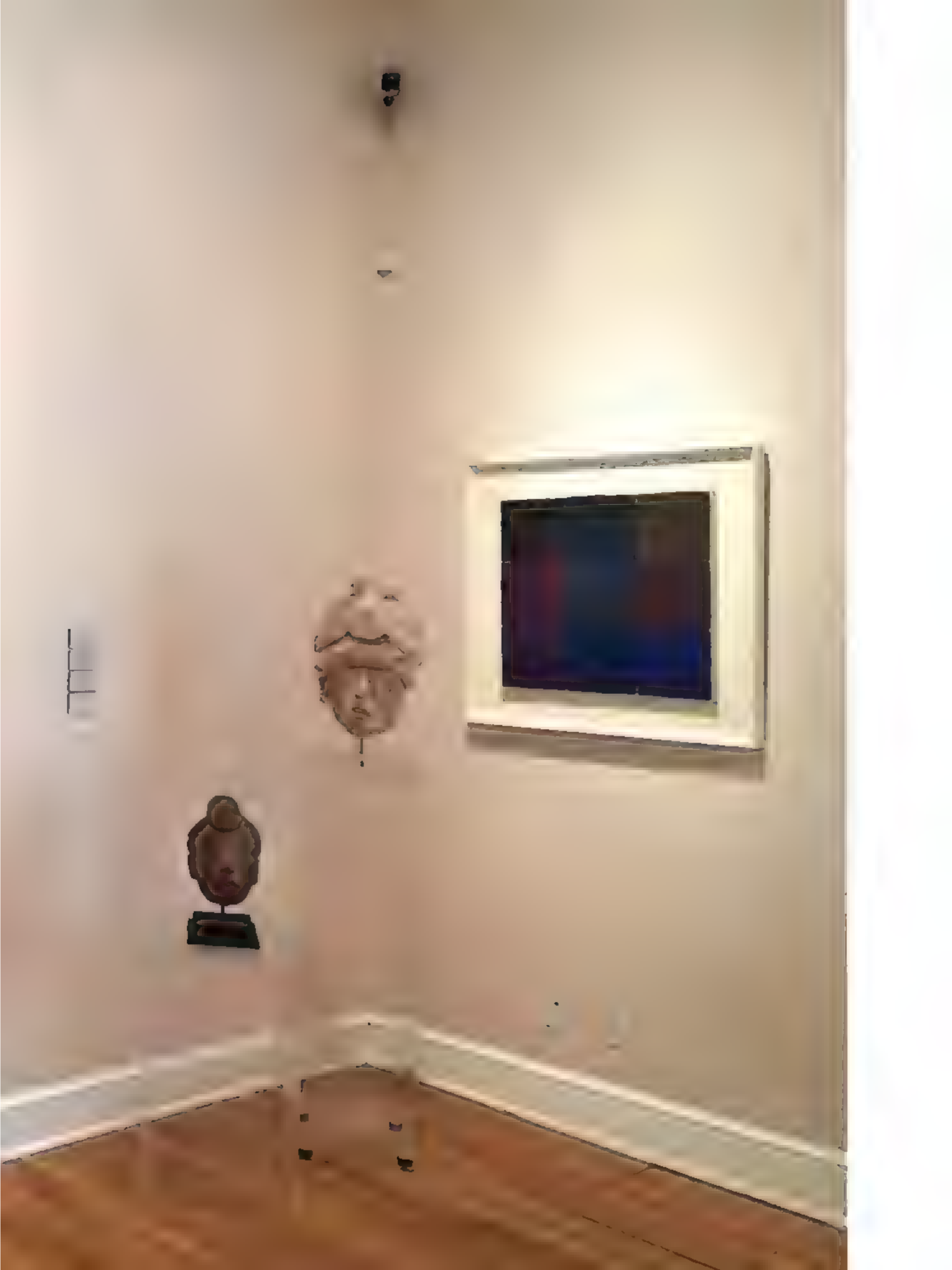
Stone

4.5 x 12 x 5 inches

Provenance

ex private collection, CA







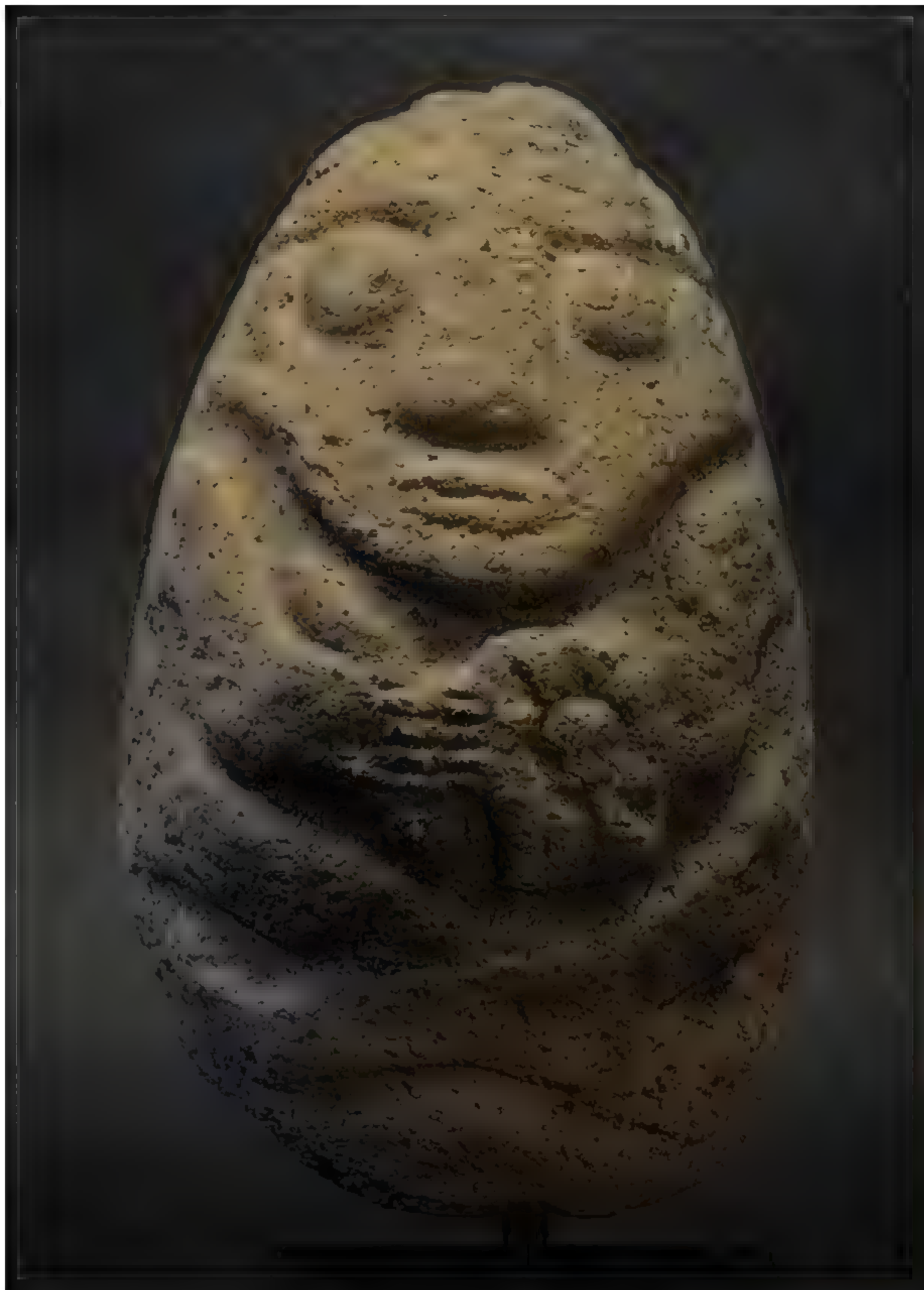
Mexico
Teotihuacan Culture
Mask of a Dignitary, 250-750 CE
Stone
8.25 x 6.75 x 3 inches

Provenance
ex private collection, Little Rock, AR

Guerrero, Mexico
Olmec Culture
Maskette, 1200-600 BCE
Greenstone
4 x 3 x 2.5 inches

Provenance
collection of Rose Marie and Dr. Murray, Santa Fe, NM, acquired in the 1940s-50s
by descent to Joseph Paul Schaumberg, Santa Fe, NM
by descent to Trace Schaumberg and Marcos Schaumberg, Santa Fe, NM





North Coast of Peru
Recuay Culture
Stone Warrior, 0-650 CE
Stone
14.5 x 9 x 7 inches

Provenance:
private collection, Santa Fe, NM





Michoacan State, Mexico
Michoacan Culture
Coyote or Wolf Throne, 900-1300 CE
Gray basalt
31.5 x 20.25 x 12.5 inches

Provenance:
ex collection Richard Bell, 1960s;
ex collection Rex Arrowsmith, Tucson, AZ, 1970;
ex collection Taylor A. Dale, Santa Fe, NM;
private collection, Santa Fe, NM

A similar example can be found in the Museo Regional de Michoacan, Morelia, Mexico.









Nigeria
Nok Culture
Male Figure, 500 BCE - 200 CE
Terra cotta
12.7 x 7 x 11.5 inches

Provenance:
Ratton Hourde Gallery, Paris, France
James Willis Gallery, San Francisco, CA 2006

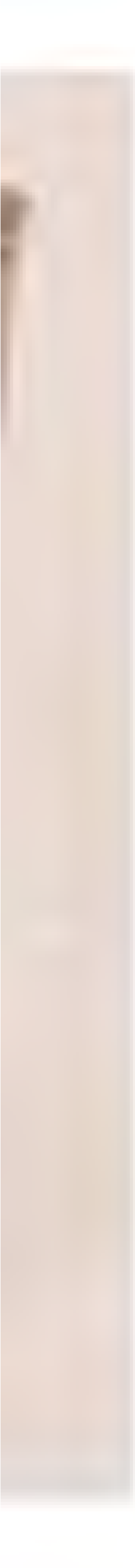
North Coast of Peru
Chimu Culture
Gauze Weaving, 500 BCE - 200 CE
Cotton, natural dyes
57 x 62 inches

Provenance
private collection, San Francisco, CA









Mesoamerica
Mayan Culture
Cylinder, 600-900 CE
Earthenware with colored slips
6.75 x 6.5 x 6.5 inches

Provenance:

ex collection of Rose Marie and Dr. Murray, Santa Fe, NM, acquired in the 1940s-50s
by descent to Joseph Paul Schaumberg, Santa Fe, NM
by descent to Trace Schaumberg and Marcos Schaumberg, Santa Fe, NM





Marajó Island, Brazil

Marajoara Culture

Bowl, 350-1350 CE

Earthenware with colored slips

10 x 10 x 5 inches

Provenance

ex collection of Jean-Eugene Lions, St. Tropez and Geneva, Switzerland

private collection, Santa Fe, NM

Exhibition history

Denver Art Museum, 2011 - "Marajo: Ancient Ceramics from the Mouth of the Amazon"

Colombia
Quimbaya Culture
Pectoral, 600-1100 CE
Gold, 3.020 troy oz
5.87 x 5.62 inches

Provenance
collection of Carlos Rodriguez, West Palm Beach, FL





India
Navagunjara Aquamanile, 17th c.
Bronze
12 x 12.5 x 4 inches

Provenance:
ex collection Alex Acevedo of Alexander Gallery, New York
ex collection Robert Lloyd Fine Art and Antiques, New York, NY 2014
Mark Walberg Fine Art and Antique, Northumberland, PA 2016



Indonesia

Bridal Crown, c. 1800

Silver, leather, glass and rhinestone

8 x 7 x 7.75 inches





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